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tapol
The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign
111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK
Telephone 081 771 2904, Fax 081 653 0322

Honorary President
Lord Avebury
Honorary Treasurer
Tom Soper
Organising Secretary
Carmel Budiardjo

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Massacre survivors to go on trial in Dili

Not satisfied with murdering up to two hundred young East Timorese on 12 November in cold blood, the forces of occupation in East Timor now intend to bring to court 32 of the survivors of the massacre. Fourteen will be tried under Indonesia's vaguely-worded anti-subversion law which means they face harsh penalties including death. Eighteen will be charged for 'lesser offenses' under the Criminal Code allowing penalties of up to seven years.

The defendants facing subversion charges include **Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha**, who is likely to go on trial soon. Gregorio, a male nurse at the Bidau General Hospital, is said to have been the leader of the peaceful demonstration. According to Indonesian press reports, he was "only wounded" when troops opened fire and was discovered among the wounded in a Dili hospital, under a false name. It is more than likely that some of the other defendants were also wounded during the massacre.

Besides trying those who survived the slaughter, the illegal occupants of East Timor have announced that three persons, identified only by their initials, will go on trial in Dili, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday this week. 'FS' is accused of "stealing" documents from the Dili military command and giving them to 'AA' who gave them to 'AR' to be smuggled to Jose Ramos Horta, special representative abroad of the National Council of Maubere Resistance. The documents were then said to have been handed over to the Portuguese president.

It is preposterous for people to be tried for "stealing" military documents. If the charges are true, those involved would have merely been trying to expose army plots to provoke and intimidate Timorese people who wanted to give vent to their aspirations during the aborted visit to East Timor of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation.

TAPOL strongly denounces these trials as being without a shred of legal justification. It is outrageous for an Indonesian court to sit in judgement over people who were demonstrating peacefully for their country's right to self-determination, in conformity with United Nations resolutions. These trials are not "due process of law"; they are political trials in a country where the judiciary functions on behalf of the Executive, in violation of the principle of the Separation of Powers. This is evident from the fact that while survivors are to be tried, not a single member of the armed forces has yet been dismissed, still less charged, for opening fire on unarmed Timorese outside and inside the Santa Cruz cemetery.

TAPOL calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all the political detainees in Dili as well as those awaiting trial in Jakarta. Governments which succour the Indonesian regime with aid and arms sales should press for their release. They should impose economic sanctions, halt the sale of military equipment and insist on an international inquiry into the 12 November massacre. The dead must be restored to their bereaved families. Those responsible for the slaughter should be identified by reputable and independent international investigators and then charged with murder.